

*The following comment transcription is from oral testimony taken April 5, 2016 at a public hearing held in room C-122 within Building C of South Seattle Community College's Georgetown campus located at 6737 Corson Avenue South, Seattle, Washington. Reporter: Mary Jo Fratella, CCR #2083*

Name: Karen Gogins

Organization: Citizens for a Healthy Bay

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“For the record, my name is Karen Gogins and I'm the policy manager for Citizens for a Healthy Bay, an environmental non-profit organization that represents and engages citizens in the clean-up, restoration, and protection of Commencement Bay, its surrounding waters, and natural habitat. I'm commenting on behalf of CHB on the new draft water rule proposed by Ecology that updates surface water quality standards in the State of Washington. CHB will submit more extensive comments in writing. It is well-known that Washington's current standards have been woefully outdated and inadequate for over 20 years. This timely -- The timely implementation of strong water quality standards for our state is of paramount importance. While the proposed rule is more protective of water quality than Ecology's first draft in 2015, CHB still has several significant concerns about its content. CHB supports standards that effectively protect human health, particularly people who regularly consume locally sourced fish and shell fish. Throughout Tacoma and Pierce County many people regularly eat local fish and shell fish. It is an integral part of our region's identity.

The proposed fish consumption rate of 175 grams per day is a significant improvement over the current rate of just six and a half; however, setting a strong and realistic fish consumption rate for all people in Washington, including Native American tribes and Pacific -- Asian Pacific Islander communities, is imperative to the equitable protection of human health. The best available data indicates rates well above the proposed 175 grams among some tribal members with treaty protected fishing rights and CHB encourages Ecology to fully account for accurate fish consumption rates.

CHB is also concerned about the draft criteria for certain toxic pollutants which critically threatens the health of our waters and community. CHB supports the EPA's more stringent limits for PCBs, arsenic, and methylmercury, and urges Ecology to implement those strong criteria values into their rule. These toxins have long threatened and damaged the health of Commencement Bay, its surrounding waters, and the people who live, work, and recreate there. Thank you for your time tonight and for taking public comment. Please consider our concerns. Doing so will help us keep the bay healthy for citizens of Tacoma and our state, and to ensure that our communities can thrive today and for generations to come. Thank you.”